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Brzezinski rips Reagan's effort for conference with Gorbachev

By Tom Diaz
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Zbigniew Brzezinski, former national security aide to President Jimmy Carter, last night ripped into President Reagan's attempts to meet with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev as "demeaning" and "tactically unwise."

He also criticized the administration's embargo of trade with Nicaragua, saying that it would make the Latin American country more dependent on the Soviet Union.

"The economic embargo does not convey seriousness, it essentially conveys evasion," he said.

Speaking to the National Leadership Forum at Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies, Mr. Brzezinski also poked fun at foreign officials and domestic media observers who see Mr. Gorbachev as "a new type of Soviet leader with much greater appeal."

Former U.N. ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, who also spoke at the forum, said the United States must come up with "creative institution-making" similar to the development of NATO to deal with security threats emerging from the Third World.

NATO — the North Atlantic Treaty Organization — has worked, while the United Nations has failed because NATO is "grounded ... on expectations a great deal less optimistic about human nature" than the "almost surely Utopian expectations" underlying the U.N. charter, she said.

Mrs. Kirkpatrick also said that, "in spite of a good deal of mythology," relations between

the United States and the Soviet Union "have not been particularly bad" during the last four years.

"People who think that relations have never been so bad have simply forgotten the past," she said, citing such low points in U.S.-Soviet relations as the Cuban missile crisis, the Berlin blockade, and tension over Greece and Turkey after World War II.

Mr. Brzezinski said Mr. Gorbachev simply fits into a familiar "KGB formula" of "modernization, regimentation and rejuvenation," he said.

"When a group of rather elderly and senile [men] chose Gorbachev to be promoted over his peers," said Mr. Brzezinski, "they saw in him significant elements of continuity as well as intelligence and vigor."

It is "too early yet to tell whether Gorbachev will make many changes in Soviet foreign policy, he said.

"But it is much too early for the president of the United States to show such eagerness," to meet the new leader, Mr. Brzezinski said.

A meeting will "automatically elevate [Mr. Gorbachev] and will help him domestically. It will make him first among equals," he added.

President Reagan's need for such a meeting is "more elusive" and that it would have been "more statesmanlike to show a greater degree of patience," he said.

The Soviet Union is now intensifying its activity in Nicaragua, reversing its earlier conclusion last winter — following Mr. Reagan's 1984 election landslide — that the president "would do to Nicaragua what he did to Grenada," he said.